



*King County Coordinated
Special Needs Transportation*

TRANSPORTATION NEEDS AND OPTIONS
for Older Adults & People with Disabilities

April 2005

Executive Summary

Jointly funded by:



Sound Transit
Contact: Michael Miller
401 S Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104-2826
206.689.4927



King County Metro
Contact: Don Okazaki
821 Second Avenue, Suite 10
Seattle, WA 98104
206.263.3453



Conducted by:



Faith Trimble, President
1204 East 4th Avenue, Suite 4
Olympia, WA 98506
360.754.1954



Stuart Elway, President
7107 Greenwood Avenue N
Seattle, WA 98103
206.264.1500

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King County Metro

King County Metro expends approximately \$40 million annually to provide paratransit services to riders who are disabled and are unable to utilize the accessible fixed route service. King County Metro recognizes there is more work to do to strengthen the broader community transportation network. Thanks to King County Metro for being a partner in this larger effort.

- ☐ Bob Sahm
- ☐ Don Okazaki
- ☐ Greg Lipton
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Sound Transit

Sound Transit has been a leader in coordinating special needs transportation in the Puget Sound Region. As a result, the products of this project will be incorporated into a coordinated regional transportation plan along with Pierce and Snohomish counties. Thanks to the people at Sound Transit who continue to support this work both in words and action.

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Key Partners in Transportation

A group called The Key Partners in Transportation has formed to work on transportation needs and solutions for the county. The Key Partners realize that the responsibility for meeting transportation needs could and should not fall solely on King County Metro. This group has been an active stakeholder in reviewing the needs assessment methodology and results.

- ☐ Aging and Disability Services, Margaret Casey, Linda Wells & Doug Ricker
- ☐ Senior Services, Cindy Zwart & Spencer Cotton
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- ☐ ADAptation, Inc., Susan Duncan
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- ☐ Others Members

Accessibility Advisory Committees

Both the Sound Transit and King County Metro Accessibility Advisory Committees were key players in designing the needs assessment approach and tools. Their guidance and input provided great insight into designing the survey tool, and resulted in more hands-on outreach to specific communities.

FLT Consulting, Inc. Team

A group of experts in their field has contributed to the production of this work. Thanks to all that have had a hand in pulling this project together.

- ☐ Casey Kanzler, Public Interest Consulting
- ☐ David Raphael, Community Transportation Consulting
- ☐ Debra Mendoza, FLT Consulting, Inc.
- ☐ Faith Trimble, FLT Consulting, Inc.
- ☐ Jeanne Ward, Ward Consulting
- ☐ Marcy Jaffe, Transportation Consulting
- ☐ Stuart Elway, Elway Research, Inc.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2003, the King County Department of Transportation, Transit Division, in conjunction with Sound Transit, contracted with FLT Consulting, Inc. to conduct a transportation needs assessment and identify transportation resources and gaps in transportation services in King County, Washington -- specifically for people with disabilities and older adults.

Historically, lack of transportation options has been reported as a barrier to accessing services, employment, and activities in the community -- particularly for people with disabilities and older adults.

The goal of this project is to identify to what magnitude this is a problem for people with disabilities and older adults in King County. An additional goal of this project is to identify the available transportation providers and capacity in King County, and identify opportunities to coordinate existing service more effectively to better serve the transportation needs of the community.

In this report, community transportation is defined as publicly funded transportation, which include the public transit system, the public education transportation system, community and social service systems, and private and neighborhood transportation services.

This report documents the results of the special transportation needs assessment and inventory, and highlights opportunities and next steps for coordinating transportation services.

The FLT Consulting, Inc.'s lead consultant team included Elway Research, Inc., Ward Consulting, and LunaWorks.

- ◆ Elway Research, Inc. conducted the needs assessment through a mail survey. Supplementing this work was an outreach effort conducted by Sound Transit.
- ◆ Ward Consulting conducted the transportation provider inventory, which was gathered through an on-line survey.
- ◆ LunaWorks designed, developed, and is hosting the website and database for FindaRide.org -- the rider interface that displays transportation provider information filtered by type of transportation need.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

King County is home to 239,857 seniors (14% of population) and 259,843 people with disabilities (16% of population – including seniors with a disability).

For the purpose of this report, seniors are defined as age 60 and above, or in some cases, 65 and above depending upon the available data. People with disabilities are defined by the U.S. Census. The census reports 6 categories of disability: sensory, physical, mental, self-care, going outside the home, and employment disability.

Ten thousand people with disabilities and seniors in King County were asked to complete a mail survey with nine qualifying questions, in the form of True/False statements. Each statement described a transportation difficulty. Those who answered “true” to more than one of the nine were invited to complete the full survey of 32 questions.

Since respondents to the survey were self-selected, the statistical reliability of the data cannot be accurately estimated. Although great care and rigorous methods were employed in the design, execution and analysis of this survey, the results can be interpreted only as representing the answers given by these respondents to these questions at the time they completed the survey.

Profile of Respondents

A total of 1,946 respondents met the qualifying criteria out of 2,283 questionnaires received. Thirty-one percent of the respondents answered “true” to seven or more of the statements, indicating a high degree of transportation hardship.

Respondents were primarily seniors age 60 and above (75%). They reported having transportation difficulties primarily due to a disability/health condition (46%), or due to both income and disability (27%).

Nearly half of the respondents (46%) receive public assistance. Forty-four percent does not commute regularly, but 26 percent commute daily, or several times per week (17%).

Forty-five percent of the respondents live in the Seattle-North region; 22 percent live in the South region; and 18 percent live in the East region.

For most respondents:

Driving is not an option

- ◆ 78 percent either cannot drive a vehicle, do not own a vehicle, or do not have access to a private car
- ◆ 70 percent are unable to travel by themselves or purchase transportation
- ◆ 72 percent do not have a valid Washington State driver's license
- ◆ 69 percent do not have someone in their household who is available to drive them places

Metro services are an option

- ◆ 79 percent of the respondents live within one mile of King County Metro bus service. ACCESS service is provided within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of fixed-route bus service for people eligible for that service.

Transportation Uses

Metro ACCESS is most popular option

Transportation methods used most frequently are:

- ◆ Metro ACCESS (30%)
- ◆ Friend/relative (24%)
- ◆ Metro Bus (17%)
- ◆ Volunteer driver (10%)

Transit use is generally high:

- ◆ 66 percent of respondents had used Metro ACCESS
- ◆ 53 percent had ridden a Metro bus
- ◆ 13 percent had used Hopelink

Most are satisfied with their transportation choices

- ◆ 74 percent of respondents say they are satisfied with their transportation choices (39% very satisfied; 35% somewhat satisfied)
- ◆ 76 percent feel that their primary mode goes where they want to go (26% strongly agree, 50% agree)
- ◆ 72 percent said the mode is available to them when they need it (24% strongly agree, 48% agree)

- ◆ 69 percent said the mode is on time (23% strongly agree, 46% agree)

- ◆ 59 percent said the mode could be adjusted to fit their own schedule (20% strongly agree, 39% agree).
- ◆ 53 percent said the mode was able to “fix problems” (16% strongly agree, 37% agree).

“Reliability” was a key criterion used to assess satisfaction with transportation modes. It was mentioned as a reason for both satisfaction and dissatisfaction with transportation.

- Respondents were most satisfied with their transportation choice due to its reliability, many locations, and good customer service.
- Respondents were most dissatisfied with the transportation option available to them due to the infrequency or slowness of service and its unreliability.

Transportation Needs & Barriers

Respondents were asked which destinations they often had difficulty getting to, and about their needs when traveling with a transportation service.

People are having difficulty getting to basic services.

- ◆ 63 percent of respondents have difficulty getting to a medical facility or drugstore
- ◆ 45 percent find it difficult to get to a grocery store
- ◆ 44 percent find it difficult to get out for social gatherings and recreation

Mobility decreases outside of Metro service area.

The 15 percent of respondents that report living outside the Metro service area most likely:

- ◆ Have transportation difficulty everyday (31%)
- ◆ Live in East King County (22%)
- ◆ Are having difficulty getting to school (23%) and government or social services (21%)
- ◆ Need “hand to hand” service (19%)

Most people report they need door-to-door service or a place to rest

- ◆ 58 percent want door-to-door service
- ◆ 54 percent want a bench to sit on while waiting
- ◆ 50 percent want a place to rest while traveling on foot

For over half, traveling is difficult anytime day or night

56 percent reported some time of day that was more difficult than others, including:

- 21 percent “daytime”
- 18 percent late afternoon
- 17 percent evening

Most have transportation difficulty less than once per week

- ◆ 41 percent said less than once per week or never
- ◆ 12 percent said they experience difficulty in getting transportation 2-4 times per week
- ◆ 3 percent said every day

Weekends are difficult travel days for some

- ◆ 27% say weekends are the most difficult time to get transportation

Characteristics of those with high degree of transportation hardship

Respondents with the most critical transportation needs are defined as the respondents that answered “true” to seven or more of the nine qualifying questions. Thirty-one percent (31%) of the respondents, or 604 individuals, fit these criteria of having a high degree of transportation hardship. Of that population:

- ◆ 56% live in areas without scheduled bus service
- ◆ Nearly half have both income and disability transportation problems
- ◆ 45% can’t get to all locations mentioned
- ◆ 46% are stranded on both weekdays and weekends
- ◆ Two out of five are under age 60
- ◆ 41% live in public housing
- ◆ 38% live in a nursing or group home
- ◆ Almost 60% have transportation difficulties every day, and almost half experience problems 2-4 times per week

Language barriers increase transportation difficulty

- ◆ 8 percent prefer to use a language other than English when reading or speaking
- ◆ 5 percent need an interpreter to help them arrange transportation

How do people get transportation information?

- ◆ 28 percent go to a friend or relative first when seeking information about transportation
- ◆ 27 percent call the transit customer service line
- ◆ 17 percent look to a printed bus or train schedule
- ◆ The transportation information most often sought includes: wait time, schedules, whether advance reservations are required, and whether same day service is available.

TRANSPORTATION INVENTORY

A total of 254 organizations and social programs in King County completed an on-line survey about the transportation and related services they provide.

Transportation Services

Role of Organization: Most respondents have multiple roles in meeting transportation needs. They provide rides as well as brokering or arranging trips, give transportation information and make referrals, dispense bus tokens or taxi scrip, and train riders in how to use the transportation system.

Annual transportation operational budget: Nearly a quarter of all respondents did not provide expenditure information. Many of these agencies don't treat transportation as a separate budget item. Of the rest:

- ◆ 74 percent have a transportation budget of under \$100,000
- ◆ 15 percent have budgets from \$100,000 to \$1 million
- ◆ 5 percent have budgets from \$1 million to \$5 million
- ◆ 6 percent have budgets of over \$5 million

Transportation Resources: Organizations use more than one approach to meeting transportation needs.

- ◆ 55 percent provide information and referral
- ◆ 54 percent own and operate vehicles
- ◆ 51 percent use volunteers to drive either their own or agency vehicles
- ◆ 39 percent arrange or broker transportation
- ◆ 18 percent provide bus tokens or passes, 9% provide taxi scrip, 6% provide gas vouchers
- ◆ 23 percent contract for transportation services

Vehicle Information:

- ◆ 46 percent of the agencies that provide transportation have just 1 or 2 vehicles
- ◆ 21 percent reported a fleet size of over 15 vehicles

- ◆ 76 percent of vehicles are less than 10 years old.
- ◆ Most vehicles are not equipped to transport people using wheelchairs:
 - Only 21 percent of respondents reported that all of their vehicles are ramp or lift equipped
 - 35 percent have some lift equipped vehicles, and
 - 44 percent have no accessible vehicles
- ◆ About 45 percent report all of their vehicles are equipped with two way radios or cell phones, but only 3 percent report that all of their vehicles have mobile data terminals.

Trip Information:

- ◆ 46 percent of respondents provide less than 100 trips per month
- ◆ 47 percent report an average length of trip of over 6 miles
- ◆ The bulk of the trips are provided by a few large providers - 4 percent make over 1,000,000 trips per year.

Capacity

- ◆ 15 percent of respondents report they can meet all requests for service
- ◆ 31 percent report they can meet less than 40 percent of trip requests

Driver and Vehicle Standards

Some of the barriers to coordinating transportation services are differences in driver and vehicle standards. The survey helped to identify these differences.

Driver Standards:

- ◆ 60 percent of agencies surveyed do not require drivers to have a commercial drivers license (CDL)
- ◆ 52 percent do not require drug testing
- ◆ 70 percent do not conduct fingerprint checks
- ◆ 79 percent conduct police background checks on their drivers
- ◆ 42 percent have an in-house driver training program
- ◆ 26 percent make drivers responsible for their own training
- ◆ 19 percent contract out for professional driver training

Vehicle Standards:

- ◆ 19 percent of provider agencies use a variety of computerized scheduling and dispatch systems
- ◆ 53 percent contract with outside vendors for all vehicle maintenance
- ◆ 14 percent do all vehicle maintenance in-house

Passenger Information

Definitions: When organizations say they provide transportation for seniors and people with disabilities, they don't always mean the same thing. Definitions differ among organizations.

- ◆ The largest percent of respondents (36%) use the ADA definition of disability
- ◆ 14 percent use self-declarations disabilities
- ◆ "Senior" is defined as anywhere from 50 to 70 years of age, with almost a quarter of the respondents using age 55+, while about 40 percent use age 65+

Trip Restrictions: A minority of providers serves the general public. Most have restrictions on eligibility for services and the types of trips they will offer.

- ◆ Only 34 percent of respondents place no restrictions on trip purposes
- ◆ 66 percent allow only specific trip purposes, such as medical, senior services, employment
- ◆ Only 19 percent have general public riders
- ◆ 81 percent serve specific populations such as seniors, agency clients, facility residents, city residents

Trip Destinations: Respondents were asked for the top three trip destinations of their clients/customers. The most frequently mentioned destinations were:

- ◆ Medical facilities/Drug stores – 63 percent
- ◆ Places of worship – 27 percent
- ◆ Grocery stores/restaurants/food banks – 25 percent
- ◆ Community & Senior Centers – 21 percent
- ◆ Personal business – 21 percent
- ◆ Employment/training/job interviews – 18 percent

COORDINATION OPPORTUNITIES

King County Metro and Sound Transit meet the transportation needs of a significant portion of the seniors and people with disabilities living in King County. Yet there are still people who have trouble using the existing system.

King County can tap into a rich array of community resources to find local solutions to improve access for all King County residents. Many existing coordination efforts exist in King County, which can be leveraged to further build a coordinated transportation system that serves the broader population.

The Key Partners in Transportation was formed to address transportation needs for vulnerable populations in a coordinated fashion. Additional organizations are interested in learning more about coordination opportunities and entering into partnerships to improve service. What's needed now is a vision and a plan.

Recommendations for next steps:

- 1.) **Key Partners in Transportation should formalize a special needs transportation coalition** in King County, with King County Metro and Sound Transit as active members.
- 2.) **Key Partners in Transportation should develop a comprehensive coordination plan** to fill service gaps and improve connectivity with the public transit system. This plan should prioritize and utilize alternative transportation strategies identified in this report.
- 3.) **Communicate service level goals.** This will help people understand what level of transportation service to expect depending on where they live within the county.
- 4.) **Further Analysis.** According to King County Metro staff, several areas of the needs assessment seem to be in conflict with existing data, in particular the areas of personal service and special facility needs; and access to basic services. Further analysis is needed in these areas.
- 5.) **Take it Region Wide.** This work, and any further work by King County or the Key Partners in Transportation, should be incorporated into the Regional Coordinated Transportation project funded by Sound Transit.

With increased investments and coordination, mobility in King County can improve. There are a multitude of resources and partners in the community that can help narrow service gaps. Increased collaboration and partnerships will be the first step towards success.